

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY SANA

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E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 384 - AUGUST 19, 1977

MOSCOW, KUWAIT, SANA FOR AMBASSADORS

LONDON FOR KINSOLVING

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. EGYPT. PRESIDENT SADAT APPEARS INCREASINGLY WORRIED ABOUT THE DOMESTIC SCENE, AS WELL AS HIS SITUATION WITH REGARD TO LIBYA. WE THINK THAT HIS CONCERN IS JUSTIFIED. HIS UNPRECEDENTED DECISION TO TAKE "LEAVE" DURING THE SECRET

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ENTIRE MONTH OF RAMADAN (MID-AUGUST TO MID-SEPTEMBER), AND TO DELEGATE THE POWERS OF THE PRESIDENCY -O VICE-PRESIDENT MUBARAK, UNDOUBTEDLY IS A REFLECTION OF THE PRESSURES ON HIM.

2. RENEWED SIGNS OF DISCONTENT WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES, THE INDISPENSABLE SUPPORT FOR THE REGIME, ARE

PARTICULARLY DISCONCERTING. IN ADDITION TO GRUMBLING WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES, POPULAR DISCONTENT OVER THE DOMESTIC ECONOMIC SITUATION REPORTEDLY REMAINS WIDESPREAD.

3. IN THIS ATMOSPHERE, SADAT'S EXTENDED VACATION TAKES ON ADDED SIGNIFICANCE. IN THE ABSENCE OF HARD INFORMATION, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HE IS MERELY SEEKING A RESPITE FROM HIS STRENUOUS DAILY ROUTINE. (AMBASSADOR EILTS REPORTED THAT AT A MEETING ON AUGUST 14 SADAT APPEARED TENSE AND FATIGUED). OUR GUESS, HOWEVER, IS THAT HE IS LOOKING FOR A MORE COMTEMPLATIVE ATMOSPHERE IN WHICH TO REFLECT ON THE CRUCIAL DECISIONS HE WILL HAVE TO MAKE IN THE NEAR FUTURE IN AT LEAST THREE AREAS.

(A) CHANGES IN KEY GOVERNMENT POSITIONS, INCLUDING THE PREMIERSHIP, HAVE BEEN PREDICTED SINCE THE JANUARY RIOTS. SUCH CHANGES MAY SEEM TO HIM EVEN MORE NECESSARY NOW, IF ONLY TO MITIGATE POPULAR CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT.

(B) SOME WAY MUST BE FOUND TO ASSUAGE THE CONCERNS OF THE ARMED FORCES ABOUT THEIR MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND MAINTAIN THEIR CONFIDENCE THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS INTENT ON REGAINING THE SINAI. THIS COULD INVOLVE DECISIONS CONCERNING SADAT'S POSTURE TOWARD THE PEACE PROCESS AND HIS RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

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(C) THE LIBYAN SITUATION, IN SADAT'S VIEW REMAINS UNFINISHED BUSINESS. MOREOVER, THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COSTS OF A MILITARY ATTACK ON LIBYA WILL HAVE TO BE WEIGHED.

4. OTHER FACTORS THAT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE TO BE CONSIDERED SERIOUSLY INCLUDE THE LACK OF ENTHUSIASM OF THE EGYPTIAN POPULATION FOR THE JULY FIGHTING, MORALE PROBLEMS WITHIN THE MILITARY, THE ECONOMIC BURDEN OF THE CONFRONTATION, THE ALLEGED WEAKENING OF EGYPT WITH RESPECT TO ISRAEL, AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF EGYPT'S DETERIORATING RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AS A RESULT OF MOSCOW'S SUPPORT OF QADHAFI.

5. DESPITE THESE CONSTRAINTS, WE DOUBT THAT SADAT WILL BACK AWAY FROM A CONFRONTATION WITH QADHAFI, PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE CONCILIATORY MOVES BY EGYPT WOULD BE AN EMBARRASSING PUBLIC ADMISSION OF FAILURE. SADAT, AT A MINIMUM, WILL KEEP THE PRESSURE ON QADHAFI, USING PROPAGANDA, CLANDESTINE MEASURES, AND THE INTIMIDATING PRESENCE OF A LARGE FORCE ALONG THE BORDER.

ON THE OTHER HAND, SADAT MAY WELL DECIDE TO ORDER THE MILITARY TO INITIATE THE STRIKE WHICH HE HAS BEEN CONTEMPLATING FOR SEVERAL MONTHS. SHOULD THE DECISION

BE MADE TO ATTACK LIBYA, WE BELIEVE THAT THE EGYPTIAN MILITARY WILL CARRY OUT SADAT'S ORDERS WITH PROFESSIONALISM AND LOYALTY, IF NOT WITH ENTHUSIASM.

6. EMBASSY CAIRO COMMENTED THAT A STIFFENING EGYPTIAN LINE ON ISRAEL HAS EMERGED IN THE PRESS THE LAST FEW DAYS. ALTHOUGH DESIGNED FOR ARAB AND PALESTINIAN CONSUMPTION, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THIS TACTIC REFLECTS REAL CONCERN THAT ISRAEL HAS NO INTENTION OF MAKING ANY ACCOMMODATIONS TOWARD SETTLEMENT AND THAT EGYPT IS GOING
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TO BE LEFT HOLDING THE BAG. THE SAME MOTIVE, ACCORDING TO THE EMBASSY, PROBABLY ACCOUNTS FOR THE MEDIA'S CONTINUING EXPRESSION OF SATISFACTION WITH US EFFORTS.

7. A RELIABLE ITALIAN SOURCE HAS SAID THAT EGYPT MAY BE PREPARING TO GO AHEAD WITH THE PURCHASE OF TWO FRIGATES FROM ITALY. IF THIS PROVES CORRECT, THIS WOULD MEAN THE EGYPTIANS HAVE RECEIVED LONG-ANTICIPATED FUNDS FROM THE SAUDIS. (SECRET)

8. PLO. THE PLO'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORTEDLY ENDED A TWO-DAY MEETING YESTERDAY BY REAFFIRMING THE ORGANIZATION'S REJECTION OF RESOLUTION 242 ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT "IGNORES THE NATIONAL RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE." ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, PLO SPOKESMAN ABU MAYZAR ASSERTED THAT SECRETARY VANCE'S RECENT VISIT HAD BEEN DESIGNED TO PROMOTE PROPOSALS THAT IGNORED PALESTINIAN NATIONAL RIGHTS; CONTRADICTED THE 1974 RABAT RESOLUTIONS RECOGNIZING THE PLO AS THE SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS AND THE 1976 UNGA RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING PALESTINIAN NATIONAL RIGHTS; AND WERE DESIGNED TO IMPOSE AN "IMPERIALIST ISRAELI SETTLEMENT" OF THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM.

9. THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, ACCORDING TO ABU MAYZAR, URGED ARABS TO "DISTINGUISH BETWEEN ENEMIES AND FRIENDS" AND NOTED THAT THE ARABS' FRIENDS WERE "LED BY THE SOVIET UNION." IN AN EARLIER DEVELOPMENT, SENIOR PALESTINIAN OFFICIAL QADDUMI WAS QUOTED YESTERDAY IN THE CAIRO MAGAZINE AL MUSAWWAR AS SATING THAT THOUGH THE PLO WAS READY TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE US, THERE WERE OBSTACLES ON THE AMERICAN SIDE. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)

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10. LEBANON. TWO DAYS AFTER A CEASEFIRE WAS TO GO INTO EFFECT, ARTILLERY DUELS CONTINUED IN SOUTHERN LEBANON YESTERDAY. AT LEAST EIGHT WERE KILLED AND DOZENS WOUNDED. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS SAID THAT, DESPITE PRESS SPECULATION, NO DATE HAS YET BEEN FIXED FOR BEGINNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SHTAWRAH AGREEMENT. RIGHTIST LEADER SHAMOUN, MEANWHILE WARNED THAT NEITHER DIALOGUE NOR NATIONAL RECONCILIATION" WAS POSSIBLE BEFORE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AGREEMENT WAS COMPLETED.

11. IN OTHER POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS, A DELEGATION OF FIVE SHIITE DEPUTIES FROM SOUTHERN LEBANON DESCRIBED THE SITUATION THERE AS DETERIORATING DAILY UNDER CONTINUING ARTILLERY ATTACKS. THE PEOPLE OF THE AREA WERE REDUCED TO SUCH STRAITS THAT THEY WERE AGAIN TALKING OF ASKING THE ISRAELIS TO COME IN AND HELP THEM. THE DELEGATION SAID RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ARTILLERY EXCHANGES SEEMED TO BE SHARED JOINTLY BY ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIAN REJECTIONISTS, BOTH OF WHOM, THE DELEGATION CLAIMED, HAD AN INTEREST IN KEEPING THE SITUATION ALONG THE BORDER UNSTABLE IN ORDER TO SABOTAGE AMERICAN PEACE EFFORTS. THE MORALE OF THE CHRISTIANS IN THE SOUTH MAY BE BAD, BUT THAT OF THE SHIITES IS MUCH WORSE. (CONFIDENTIAL)

12. ISRAEL. DURING THE LAST THREE MONTHS ISRAEL HAS RESPONDED TO ETHIOPIAN REQUESTS FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE BY SENDING MODEST SHIPMENTS OF AMMUNITION AND CERTAIN NON-LETHAL MILITARY SUPPLIES. SINCE THE LAST RESIDENT ISRAELI MILITARY ADVISER LEFT ETHIOPIA A YEAR AGO, THE ISRAELI PRESENCE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO ONE OR TWO CIVILIAN INTELLIGENCE SPECIALISTS WITH OCCASIONAL BRIEF VISITS BY MILITARY EXPERTS. IN LATE JULY, ETHIOPIA BEGAN PRESSING THE ISRAELIS FOR SUBSTANTIAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND IN PARTICULAR

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FOR FIGHTER AIRCRAFT (APPARENTLY F-5S, WHICH ISRAEL DOES NOT POSSESS) AND TRANSPORT PLANES.

13. TEL AVIV WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY CONTINUE TO PROVIDE MODEST MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA. IT IS NOT LIKELY TO BE DETERRED BY THE FACT THAT IT JOINS THE USSR AND LIBYA AS ONE OF THE FEW EXTERNAL SUPPORTERS

OF THE MENGISTU REGIME. WE BELIEVE THAT ISRAEL REMAINS KEENLY INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING A PRESENCE IN ETHIOPIA BECAUSE:

(A) BOTH ISRAEL AND ETHIOPIA HAVE A MAJOR COMMON ENMITY TOWARD THE ARABS.

(B) ETHIOPIA IS IMPORTANT TO ISRAEL;S CONTINUING EFFORT TO PREVENT TOTAL ARAB CONTROL OF THE RED SEA.

(C) ETHIOPIA IS ONE OF THE FEW REMAINING COUNTRIES OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IN WHICH ISRAEL RETAINS A PRESENCE OF ANY KIND.

(D) ISRAEL REGARDS IT AS IMPORTANT THAT ETHIOPIA RETAIN SOME LINKS WITH THE WEST AND PROBABLY SEES ITS PRESENCE AS CONTRIBUTING TO THIS GOAL.

(E) MENGISTU HAS PERSONAL TIES WITH THE ISRAELIS STEMMING FROM HIS EARLY MILITARY TRAINING AT AN ISRAELI-STAFFED MILITARY SCHOOL IN ETHIOPIA. (SECRET/NOFORN)
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